

Chapter 2.3 MONITORING STRATEGY REVISION PROCESS and TIMELINES

In 1997, in response to EPA suggestions and the establishment of new legislative water quality monitoring requirements enacted by the Virginia General Assembly, DEQ formed a Water Quality Monitoring (WQM) Taskforce. Its objectives were to evaluate, complement, integrate, and define the direction of the various components of the agency's WQM Program. The Taskforce attained its objectives with the elaboration of a document to describe its integrated WQM Program Strategy in mid-1999, and submitted draft copies of the document to upper DEQ administration and subsequently to EPA at the end of that year. Following a series of meetings with, and presentations to, national and regional EPA representatives, a WQM Academic Advisory Committee and an independently appointed DEQ Scientific Advisory Committee, the agency adapted the original strategy to incorporate suggestions from the reviewing bodies during 2000 and 2001.

In 2002 the Association of State and Interstate Water Pollution Control Administrators (ASIWPCA), in conjunction with the EPA Office of Water, circulated a draft document describing the ten essential elements of a state water quality monitoring program. The EPA published the final form of this document as "Elements of a State Water Monitoring and Assessment Program" (EPA 841-B-03-003, available from the EPA WebPages at <http://www.epa.gov/owow/monitoring/repguid.html>) in March of 2003. During this same time interval, DEQ began to evaluate its existing WQM strategy, simplifying the format of the original document, updating and revising the strategy to include adaptations in program structure and monitoring methods that had evolved during the preceding four years, and to ensure that all ten of the essential elements described by EPA were adequately addressed and incorporated into the strategy.

In brief, the ten essential elements required were enumerated as follows:

1. Program Strategy (to include the following nine elements)
2. Monitoring Objectives (purpose)
3. Monitoring Design (site selection, etc.)
4. Core and Supplemental Water Quality Indicators (parameter list)
5. Quality Assurance measures (citations of Quality Assurance Project Plans, etc.; what QA measures, who is responsible, frequency, reporting requirements, etc.)
6. Data Management description (database, data entry, public access, etc.)
7. Data Analysis / Assessment description (305(b) or other; methodology, who is responsible, frequency, reporting requirements, etc.)
8. Reporting requirements (305(b) or other? Who is responsible, frequency, etc.?)
9. Periodic Review of Program (who is responsible - internal and/or external review, frequency, follow-up requirements/activities, etc.)
10. General Support and Infrastructure (funding, staff, training, laboratory resources, forthcoming improvements, etc.)

Once EPA adopted their final guidance document, a DEQ coordinator began carrying out the initial phase of this process, editing and reformatting the original document. Sections concerning the various subprograms were subsequently circulated to the coordinators/managers of those specific monitoring activities for individual review, evaluation and revision during the second calendar quarter. After all sections had been returned and reunited, a copy of the entire draft document was circulated to DEQ Office of Water Quality Programs administrators, to members of the DEQ Central Office's WQM coordination group, and to DEQ Regional Office Monitoring and Assessment Coordinators in late 2003. The return of comments, suggestions and edits from these individuals was requested by mid-January of 2004.

These individual comments will be integrated into the draft strategy document, then DEQ workgroups will be established to address any specific gaps that were perceived and copies of the consequent draft strategy will be sent to EPA for their comments (February 2004). Soon thereafter, a meeting will be scheduled for a DEQ WQM team to deliver an oral presentation of the draft strategy to EPA regional and national representatives. EPA comments and suggestions will subsequently be reviewed and incorporated by May 2004, after which a final draft strategy document will be presented to DEQ Executive Management (by July). Managerial comments and suggestions will be incorporated and the final revised WQM Strategy will be submitted to EPA by September 30, 2004.